

03 February 2022

## **EEHT Update paper**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This paper provides updates on a range of issues within the remit of the Board that are not already covered in other Board agenda items.

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## **Housing, Planning and Homelessness**

### Housing improvement

1. The Housing Advisers Programme (HAP) has now announced 30 successful projects for 2021/22, supporting 90 councils across the country. The programme continues to fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils – or groups of councils – wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness.
2. A framework has now been developed for the delivery of a Social Housing Management Peer Challenge offer, following feedback from an engagement exercise with the sector. The first pilot in the East of England is due to go ahead in early February, with a second to follow in London before the end of the financial year. These pilots will inform proposals for 2022/23, which are under discussion.

### Ground Rent Bill

3. We have [briefed](#) parliamentarians during the passage of the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill, stressing the importance for new burdens funding to enable councils to undertake the proactive work necessary to ensure compliance with the new legislation.

### Inquiry into the regulation of social housing

4. We submitted [evidence](#) to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry into the regulation of social housing in England. Among the key points made in the submission were the challenges that right to buy policy has on council housing stock provision; the role of sector-led improvement through in supporting the delivery of high-quality social housing; the impact of building safety remediation and retrofit programmes on the ability to maintain and improve housing stock and deliver new supply and [our case for councils to be given powers to build 100,000 social homes for rent each year](#). The submission reiterated the point that councils play a [vital role in housing supply](#) as planning and housing authorities, as partners with house builders and registered providers, as direct builders, as providers of homes for the most vulnerable and as local place leaders.

### Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Rough Sleeping

5. We [responded](#) to a call for evidence which looked at the governments “lack of progress towards either the promise to end rough sleeping entirely by 2024, or the Government’s manifesto commitments on house-building”. We highlighted the vital

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role council housing plays in preventing homelessness. We also made the argument for a cross-departmental homelessness prevention strategy following on from the achievements of 'Everyone In' to reap the benefits and deliver on promises to end rough sleeping by 2024.

#### Temporary Accommodation Peer Support Programme

6. Work is underway on setting up a number of delivery and impact panels to engage with 100-150 councils on the topic of temporary accommodation. This follows on from the success of the [Rough sleeper peer support programme](#). Temporary accommodation use in England is on the rise and as councils continue to work with the legacy of Everyone In and an ongoing lack of affordable housing, homelessness services are faced with the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation in their area.
7. This project will capture best practice, uncover the main challenges and opportunities for change, and produce a voice of the sector report which will provide guidance to councils and be shared with central government.
8. To launch the project we hosted [a webinar](#) attended 140 delegates, indicating a huge interest in this topic across the sector.

#### Homelessness Prevention Project with Local Partnerships

9. Leeds City Council and Cornwall Council have been selected to take part in research to identify best practice in relation to homelessness prevention and to begin to develop a case for investment that can help to improve homelessness prevention services nationally. This work is part-funded by the LGA and will be carried out by Local Partnerships.
10. As part of this work, Local Partnerships will look to compare national and local Key Performance Indicators in relation to homelessness prevention expenditure and outputs. They will be looking to understand what works well and how broad outputs associated with homelessness prevention can be measured or estimated. We will then work with Local Partnerships to consider making recommendations to DLUHC based on examples of good practice which are replicable.

#### Other Parliamentary activity

11. We have also briefed for debates on: [access to affordable housing and planning reform](#); [role of developers, house-builders and management companies in new homes](#) and [insecurity in the private rental market](#).

#### Economy

12. As mentioned in the work programme at the beginning of the year, the LGA had commissioned three pieces of work in relation to local economy and business via the DHLUC grant funded sector-led improvement programme. These are now published on the LGA website, and can be accessed through the following links:
  - [Supporting councils with business engagement](#). This report sets out how councils can engage more effectively with businesses in the future to support economic

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recovery and growth. The firm foundation built through the pandemic gives an opportunity to bring a strong business voice into local action and policy making.

- [Public-Private Partnerships: Driving Growth, Building Resilience](#). This good practice guide aims to support councils to plan and establish more effective public-private partnerships, which can deliver the investment, development and services that are essential to boosting economic growth and recovery.
- [Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal'](#). Economics and strategy research consultancy, Pragmatix Advisory, and futures experts, Trajectory, were commissioned by the Local Government Association to identify how councils can help create resilient and revitalised high streets beyond the pandemic.

### **Minimum Revenue Provision**

13. In November DLUHC launched a [consultation](#) on proposed changes to the regulations underpinning the Government's [Statutory guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision](#) (one of the four code that form the Prudential Framework for Capital Finance). The proposal will put the requirement to make Minimum Revenue Provision (an amount to set aside each year from the revenue account to repay the principal of debt) onto a statutory footing. The consultation closes on 8 February and we are now involved in discussions with a number of councils and a round table hosted by DLUHC to understand the implications and any unintended consequences of the proposals, for example affecting councils' ability to invest in infrastructure and housing via wholly owned companies or negatively impact on council revenue budgets. The LGA Resources Board is leading on this issue.

### **Transport**

#### **Active Travel England**

14. The Department for Transport ([DfT](#)) has launched [Active Travel England](#), a new cycling and walking body with Chris Boardman, former Olympian, to become its interim national commissioner. Active Travel England will be responsible for driving up the standards of cycling and walking infrastructure and managing the national active travel budget, awarding funding to local authorities for projects that improve both health and air quality. The LGA has called for a proportionate and balanced approach to inspection and local support and capacity building. Further funding to councils for e-cargo bikes, funding for cycle rail and routes to stations and social prescribing was also announced.

#### **Funding for bus services**

15. The LGA has written to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor to highlight the potential threat to local bus services as funding through the Bus Recovery Grant finishes at the end of March 2022. We have called on the Government to commit early to keeping the BRG going beyond March 2022, so that vital routes are not lost – possibly for good, and people can continue to keep faith in their local bus services.

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## EV charging

16. In November 2021 Cllr Renard met with the new minister responsible for EV charging and OZEV (Office of Zero Emission Vehicles), Trudy Harrison MP. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the role of councils in delivering the EV charging infrastructure that will help the country to transition to electric vehicles. As well as roles, the discussion also covered issues such as local capacity, future funding and the forthcoming EV charging infrastructure strategy from OZEV. The LGA also submitted a [response](#) to OZEV's Future of transport regulatory review: zero emission vehicles consultation on whether there should be a statutory obligation to plan and deliver a charging infrastructure.

## Environment and Climate Change

### Waste and recycling

17. Household waste and recycling services have been under pressure from staff shortages related to the Omicron variant. We have responded to media requests for information and continue to work with Defra and the waste officer networks to understand the impact on service delivery. There are signs of localised disruption but the overall picture is still unclear. We also responded to the release of updated figures on household recycling rates from Defra in December, which covered 2020 and the period of national lockdowns. Our response highlighted the significant achievements from local government in increasing food waste collections and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill by 7% on the previous year.

### Cop26

18. In November 2021 a delegation of local leaders and EEHT members, Cllrs Pippa Heylings, Claire Holland and myself, attended COP26 in Glasgow, alongside our Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and Chief Executive Mark Lloyd. The LGA had representation in both the Blue Zone, where the negotiations took place, and the public-facing Green Zone where we showcased the important work of councils tackling climate change. In the Blue Zone, we hosted a series of important discussions and events focusing on the vital role of councils in delivering net zero and the potential for local government to make this happen further and faster. Throughout COP26, the delegation worked hard to make sure the importance of councils in tackling climate change was recognised in the final wording of the Glasgow Climate Pact and that was achieved.

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#### Phasing out fossil fuel heating

19. On Wednesday 12 January 2022 we responded to government consultations on [Phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in homes off the gas grid](#) and [Phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in non-domestic buildings off the gas grid](#). You can read our response to the [consultation relating to homes](#) and to the one on [non-domestic buildings](#).

#### Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in Domestic Soft Seating Furniture

20. Officers have been working with Defra and the Environment Agency on guidance for Local Authorities on managing domestic soft seating furniture waste following [New research](#) confirming that many items of domestic seating soft furnishings waste contain significant amounts of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), meaning that the POPs content must be destroyed. Officers are looking to ensure that the guidance is clear, aims to maintain current levels of repair and reuse, doesn't exhaust existing EFW disposal capacity and that councils are not financially burdened from new regulatory requirements.

#### Environment Act

21. The Environment Act received Royal Assent in December after a long journey through the Houses of Parliament. The Act gives significant new responsibilities to local authorities on nature and biodiversity, and provides the legislative basis for reforms to waste and recycling services. We are working with Defra on the next steps, and seeking clarity on the timetable for implementation of the waste and recycling reforms.